



The Education of Children in Relation to Temperance.

An Address delivered at the Meeting
of the Council of the B.W.T.A.

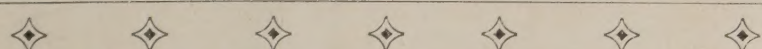
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The Position of the Average Medical Man.

From his earliest student days a medical man cannot fail to be impressed by the extent to which disease is connected with intemperance in the use of alcohol. He is bound to be convinced that the influences which diminish this intemperance must necessarily lessen disease. I think we may say, therefore, that if the average medical man is alive to the promotion of the welfare of the community, he will be animated by the desire of restraining the use of alcohol. I, personally, will yield to no one in my desire to see temperance universal, and this wish has led me to frequently think out the best possible means of attaining this result.

Methods adapted to restraining use of Alcohol.

A great deal has been done by appropriate legislation. I need not instance the different measures, as my audience are as well acquainted with these as myself.

Let me, however, remind you what, ethically, the essence of this legislation is. It consists in *removing*

the temptation. If the temptation to alcohol is absent, clearly the result of intemperance cannot occur. But as one keenly desirous of promoting temperance, I wish to take my stand upon education as the only perfectly effective weapon wherewith to fight alcoholism, and it will be necessary for me to describe fully what I mean by *education* in this respect.

The propagandist work that is, and has been, done by many temperance societies both with children and adults is educational. I am not here concerned with the education of adults, I simply want to speak about the education of the young. It is the education of the child that I have the greatest interest in, in view of the potentialities that children possess for their more developed life.

I do not propose to discuss the comparative value of the different subjects taught in schools, for inculcating temperance, what I want to do is to point out what must be included in any rational scheme of education in order that temperance may be *a perfectly natural endowment of the educated*. I do not hesitate fearlessly to assert, that an appropriate rational education involving a properly organised study of matters pertaining to health, is the only possible way in which you can hope to obtain anything like an ideal social condition in respect to temperance. One may reasonably anticipate *then* that we may have alcohol no longer affording the same temptation, not because you remove it from access, but because it ceases to act as a temptation. And in this I think lies the strength of this educational method of fighting alcoholism, you take away from alcohol to an increasing extent its force to act as a temptation.

The Mind of the Child.

I am going to ask you to follow me, though I fear I may somewhat weary you, whilst I describe to you something of the prominent characteristics of the child's mind at different ages. I do this, because, only by appreciating these differences, can one accurately form a judgment as to the fitness of the precise form of teaching to be adopted. It is necessary to understand fully that we cannot with advantage give detached and haphazard instruction at any time of a child's school life; there must be a distinct relation between the character of the teaching and the child's mental development. The complete appreciation of the capacity of the child at different ages is only possible to the properly trained educationalist. You might as well expect a labourer to design a complicated bridge over the Thames, a task only to be successfully undertaken by the trained engineer, as to conceive that a child can be efficiently educated by a method devised by one who had not had a professional training in educational methods.

From the biological aspect, the mind of the child affords material, the essential characters of which are :

- (1) Its qualitative and quantitative increase, *i.e.*, it develops and grows.
- (2) Its plasticity.

It has certain characters, at first somewhat dormant, some of which are determined by its heredity, or other forces early at work. These characters may be bad or they may be good, either for the community or for the individual. The object of education is to so work upon these natural characters that the desirable may grow and develop, largely by use, the undesirable by disuse and suppression will tend to abort.

During the course of education, as Clouston says, it is necessary to establish a correlation between mental hygiene and educational methods. The brain should be responsive to the ordinary mental stimuli, its receptivity is prominent, such stimuli should provoke a reaction, which on the subjective side should be pleasurable. The responses should need guidance and training, but not pressure. And the aim of education will be to encourage those forms of response that make for social efficiency in the individual and repress those that make for unfitness. The mind of the child is slowly evolving, and to strengthen its power of adaptation to its environment is the aim of the training.

It must be remembered that this power of adaptation is variable in different children. Some methods designed to assist in its development are successful in some children, others in other children. The object of education should be to select intelligently the most successful method for such development. It is necessary that the teacher, as far as possible, should regard as an ideal the establishment of co-ordinate development of mind and body. The different movements of the trunk and limbs, involving the harmonious working of different groups of muscles, do not develop in equal stages. The coarser movements of entire limbs are apparent before the finer co-ordinate movements of the different segments of those limbs. This, again, all depends upon certain groups of nerve cells in the brain acquiring complete function earlier than other groups. The movements, then, depend upon appropriate brain development, as far as co-ordination of the different muscles which bring them about is concerned. Apart from this co-ordination is the development of the muscle itself, which furnishes the energy of the move-

ment, but the initiation and guidance of the movement is entirely a function of the brain.

The Development of Control.

This is one of the most striking examples of how closely the functions of the brain are connected with what we inexactly distinguish as the function of the body. We have then in the child incompletely developed brain material in which the cell connections tend to follow certain paths determined by its heredity. The resistance to the passage of impulses along these paths is diminished by use, perhaps even new anatomical paths are laid down. But the ease with which reactions follow mental stimuli, what I may call the impetuosity of response, is influenced by the mental training the child receives. One of the most obvious results of educational training at a certain stage is the development of control over these responses, the development of what is technically called *inhibition*. The ordinary responses depending upon the functioning of certain groups of nerve-cells are modified or suppressed as the result of influences proceeding from other, so-called higher, groups of nerve-cells. What the physiological basis of this may be is not a matter we can discuss now; here we are concerned simply with the external features of this state of control. The central inhibition or control involves at first, in conscious action, effort. With practice, this effort becomes less marked. But the repression of the natural responses of mind or body to certain stimuli may involve an overflow in other directions. Some energy transformation is brought about a certain stimulus, and this is

normally followed by a reaction along a definite path of a positive and obvious character. By education, in some way, this reaction is repressed, but it may be impossible to prevent it adopting some other path.

We see an example in the suppression of movement, resulting when patients endure a painful operation, if they are permitted some such safety valve as biting a folded handkerchief. Some so early develop a power of control that they can dispense with such assistance. This immobility to pain, physical or mental, is an extreme example of conscious central inhibition, and one in which the peculiarities of the individual constitute an important factor.

Looking then, generally, at the different mental characteristics of a child, and putting them into some sort of chronological order in development, we observe that in its very earliest years it can appreciate simple sensations of pleasure and pain and respond by movements to them; then succeeds a second stage, in which apprehension of objects and emotions of fear may be noted, simple reasoning powers can be observed, the tendency to imitation is pronounced, whereas self-control is not marked. The powers of observation, however, are much in evidence at this period. In a third stage, imagination, unfettered by experience, becomes pronounced, but greater self-control is now seen. And in a last stage, control or inhibition is further increased; the child becomes reflective and displays a greater aptitude, by casting off its individuality to some degree, for taking its place in the community as a social unit.

The Main End of Education.

We may take it that the main end of education is to promote the development of the child into an efficient unit of the community. This must necessarily depend upon the degree of self-control or inhibition that has been developed. Responses which were at first natural to the child are held in suspense, irrational impetuosity is checked, and in this we see how a stimulus, provoking a certain reaction, will either cease to provoke such reaction or only do so with some restraint. There will not be the blind yielding to passion or emotion or desire if this faculty of self-control is properly encouraged during mental development.

That this should occur will be to some extent the result of discipline. But discipline alone will make for merely automatic response, and it is of the highest importance that the reasoning powers of the child should be encouraged. In the second and later chronological stages mentioned above, a child will constantly be asking "why?" Nothing is more deadening to a child's mental development than to be answered when this question is asked by "Because I say so." Reasons should always be given, the child must not be taught by the pressure of authority. By itself it will naturally acquire a great respect for authority in its parents and teachers, but this must not be encouraged to the exclusion of its reflective powers. A child fortified by maxims of what is good, which it has accepted on the authority of its teachers, has no chance in the problems it will later meet, as compared with the child

that has been trained to understand the reasons underlying its various actions. As compared with the second, the first child is blind. Consider the analogy. A blind child is trying to find its way across a field to a certain point; unless the path be fenced closely, it will never reach its destination. But the child with sight can see its path and aim, and requires no close fencing to keep it in the right direction. This exactly represents the difference between the child taught simply by authority not understanding the maxims, excellent in themselves, that it has acquired and the child that has a rational understanding of its activities in life.

As some illustration of educational methods, may I here refer to the advice of an expert of the seventeenth century, John Locke. In his view, the object of youthful education is to produce a being who will find his happiness in the exercise of moral and intellectual virtues, who will live for the noblest things that men can live for, simply because to do otherwise would be unnatural to him.

John Locke's Advice.

The merit of Locke's teaching is that he recognises that the treatment of the young in their educational training must apply both to the body and the mind, and must be directed to the healthy working of both. Some of the advice he gives sounds severe in application, but I am far from decrying its value. Speaking of the physical training of children, he says, he is not concerned with what a physician should do with a sick or

crazy child, but what the parents and presumably the teachers should do for the preservation and improvement of a healthy, or at least not sickly constitution in children under their charge. Children must not be too warmly clad, either winter or summer; the head must not be kept warm, for nothing more disposes to headache, colds and catarrhs than this. The feet should be washed every day in cold water, and the child should have his shoes so thin that they may leak and let in water whenever he comes near it. "He that considers how mischievous and mortal a thing taking wet in the feet is to those who have been bred nicely, will wish he had, with the poor people's children, gone barefoot." Besides the cleanliness involved, the end of the frequent and familiar use of cold water is to harden the legs and feet and prevent the mischief usually attending accidental wetting. Swimming he recommends, and the frequent bathing in cold water during the heat of summer, but he cautions against going into cold water when exercise has at all warmed a boy or left an "emotion" in his blood or pulse. It is of special advantage to children to be much in the open air, and very little by the fire, even in winter. Children should play in the open air with bare heads. But when the child has become warm from exercise he must not sit down on the cold or moist earth, or drink cold drink. As regards clothing, clothes must never be tight. Diet should be plain and simple, flesh but once a day. Well made and well baked brown bread in plenty, and "whatever he eats that is solid make him chew it well." Breakfast and supper should be light, milk, gruel, and

so on, sparingly seasoned with sugar and devoid of spice. "If at any time he calls for victuals between meals, use him to nothing but dry bread; if he be hungry more than wanton, bread alone will go down; and if he be not hungry, it is not fit he should eat." The morning is designed for study, but too big a breakfast is a bad preparation. The boy's drink should be only small beer (which may be regarded as practically without alcohol) and he should never be suffered to have this between meals alone, but after he has eaten a piece of bread. Great care should be taken that the boy seldom, if ever, tastes any wine or strong drink. "There is nothing," he says, "so ordinarily given to children in England and nothing so destructive to them. They ought never to drink strong liquor but when they need it as a cordial, and the doctor prescribes it. There is nothing that lays a surer foundation of mischief, both to body and mind, than children being used to strong drink." Finally, he points out that the teacher must not aim at teaching all that is knowable so much as to raise a love and esteem of knowledge, and to put the boy in the right way of knowing or thinking.

We may have to vary this advice of Locke's somewhat at the present day, but as a collection of health maxims in education rationally absorbed, we must admit that Locke's teaching was many years before its time. I wish to urge that the only rational method of inculcating temperance is by continuous and systematic education, properly adapted to the child's mind at its different stages. Object lessons in temperance can be

gathered from history and other school subjects at many stages. But the same value cannot be given to this detached form of instruction in temperance as it can to a continuous system in which temperance must necessarily occupy a place into which it fits. Any specialisation in temperance teaching should only be employed in later years of school life, and the mind of the child should be continuously moulded in its earlier years to make this special instruction absolutely natural and consecutive.

Study of the Laws of Health.

You will gather from what I have said that in my own mind there is no doubt that the properly adapted study of the laws of health must form the groundwork upon which temperance can alone be successfully taught. This study of the laws of health is sometimes spoken of as the study of hygiene. But it must be very clearly understood what is included in this term. We don't want children to be given any instruction in disease, even in its simpler manifestations; we want them, however, to be trained in the principles as well as the practice of healthy living. Further, we don't want to see this study brought in in a detached manner, at any particular period of a child's education. We want to see the study of the laws of health systematic, continuous and consecutive. I have no doubt that detached or specialised instruction in hygiene or temperance loses much of its value for the child by means of the lack of suitable groundwork or preparation.

There will be quite frequently some instinct of rebellion or prejudice against this detached instruction, which vanishes when it follows logically upon a proper introduction.

A Scheme of Systematic Instruction.

This leads me to say something of the Board of Education Syllabus of temperance. I regard this syllabus as excellent in its subject matter, but I feel that the best possible cannot be got out of it, that it will not yield successful fruit unless its seed be sown in adequately prepared ground. What I plead for is continuity and harmony in all the experience of a child's educational life. I imagine you will wish me to present some outline of a suitable scheme for systematic instruction. It is necessary, of course, to relate the character of the instruction to the different stages of a child's mental development. I suggest four periods corresponding to development of the child's faculties, briefly described as follows :—

(a) Under 8 years. General observational science, particularly in the form of elementary nature study.

(b) Years 8-10. Elementary lessons in health in relation to everyday experiences in food and drink, fresh air, clothing, cleanliness, treated experimentally in all cases.

(c) Years 10-12. Phenomena of living things generally, indicating various influences which modify these phenomena.

(d) Years 12-14. Extension of, and more specialised instruction in temperance, first aid, etc. For girls, special instruction in the care of infants would also be included.

Special Relation to Alcohol.

Finally, may I say a word or two upon what I believe would be the advantages of all this. The evils of alcohol would be put in their natural place, ranged alongside other evils and proportionately valued. All influences adverse to the healthy development and maintenance of the mind and body would be indicated, and the special position of alcohol would be shown. Intemperance would naturally be regarded as adverse to health and general fitness for the world's work. A general control of appetites and passions would be much more likely to result from such systematic teaching, alcohol would tend to lose much of its force as a temptation, since a rational distaste for intemperance could not fail to result. I would like to point out that a new opportunity for making use of this weapon against alcoholism is at hand in the Bill promoted by Dr. Addison, M.P., for the compulsory teaching of Hygiene in Elementary Schools. Though this Bill has been temporarily blocked, I feel sure that this has only been done to see if its value cannot be enhanced, that what is good may be made even better.

The amount of support already promised for it is practically overwhelming, and I am confident that even though its progress is delayed, the Bill cannot fail soon to reach the Statute Book.

By this continuous training in the principles and practice of healthy living, we may look forward to a much improved social state. The eyes of many would be opened to the perils that beset them from disease, they will be trained naturally to keep to the path of health, and our future generations would respond to temptation and vice in a way the present cannot, often from sheer ignorance of what is right. We have reason to hope these future generations will do what is good in matters pertaining to health, not simply because such evils as intemperance will be nakedly exposed, but (to adopt Aristotle) because to do otherwise would be painful.

